Government of Andhra Pradesh has reported that the following measures have been taken by them for improving the efficiency of Public Distribution System in the State, particularly in remote areas:

i. Regular functioning of fair price shops.

ii. Creating consumer awareness about the availability, entitlement and rates by active involvement of consumer organizations in the functioning of the system.

iii. Transparency in Public Distribution System.

iv. Issue of bar coded coupons for proper accounting of distribution.

v. Timely lifting and reaching the commodities to the fair price shops.

vi. Proper enforcement of Weights and Measures Laws.

vii. Correct charging of rate by the Fair Price Shop dealers.

viii. Targeting of BPL families on realistic norms - neither too low nor too high.

ix. Covering the tribal areas by the Fair Price Shops and catering to the needs of the tribal population both BPL/AAY.

x. Opening of new Fair Price Shops depending upon the need and the distance to be covered by the cardholder.

xi. Opening mobile Fair Price Shops, whenever the necessity is felt, with a view not to cause any hardship to the cardholders in tribal and remote areas.

xii. Conducting regular inspections of the MLS Points and Fair Price Shops.

xiii. Attending to complaints promptly and redressing grievances of the cardholders.

Actual selling price of electronic/electrical items

35. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that in case of certain electronic/electrical items, the actual selling prices are much below the MRP printed on the packs by the manufacturers;

(b) the factual position in this regard and whether this practice does not defeat the objective of the law requiring the indication of MRP on the products; and

(c) the Government's assessment of the problem, the remedial steps taken/proposed in this behalf alongwith the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) to (c) The Government has not received any specific complaint that certain electronic/electrical items are sold much below the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) declared on a package. The MRP declared on a package gives protection to consumer from being overcharged by the retailer in excess of the price declared by the manufacturers. The case for taking remedial measures will arise only if consumers are charged a price higher than MRP. Excise duty under the Central Excise Act is based on MRP declared on a package for notified commodities.

Thus if a manufacturer declares a higher price as MRP he will also have to pay higher taxes; this act as a deterrent to declare higher prices. Apart from this competitive market forces also will encourage manufacturers not to declare unreasonably higher prices.

Waiver of excise duty on sugar and molasses

36. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Maharashtra has requested for waiver of excise duty on sugar and molasses;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if waiver is not possible, whether Government is willing to defer payment of excise for a specified period;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor, and

(e) other alternative steps are proposed to be taken to help sugar industry to come out of financial crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (e) The Chief Minister, Government of Maharashtra *vide* letter dated July 16, 2007 requested the Union Government, *inter alia*, to waive excise duty on sugar and molasses as the prices of sugar and molasses were recording downward trend and in case waiver was not possible, to defer payment of excise duty for three years. The Union Government considered the request of the Government of Maharashtra and decided to give loans from banks under special guidelines to the sugar mills in private, public and cooperative sector which also involved full interest subvention up to a cap of 12% per annum.

Wastage of foodgrains

37. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a year round strategic foodgrain buffer as maintained by China;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the quantity of foodgrains got destroyed in various Government/Public Sector warehouses during last two years; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to prevent loss of foodgrains in warehouses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) In order to ensure food security in the country, keep the prices under check and maintain adequate supplies of foodgrains for TPDS,